



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Situation in the Transnistrian Region of Moldova

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 6, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States is deeply disappointed by the decision by the regime in the Transnistrian region of Moldova not to attend, and thereby postponing indefinitely, the next round of the Five-Plus-Two negotiations, originally scheduled to take place this week.

We hope that the Tiraspol regime will reconsider this decision and return to the negotiating table to hold serious discussions on the issues that, unfortunately, it has avoided during the last several rounds – I'm speaking of course of the exchange of military information; the monitoring of Transnistria's military-industrial enterprises; the implementation of an international assessment to evaluate the possibility for free and fair, internationally monitored elections in the Transnistrian region; and resolving the plight of farmers in Dorotscaia who have been denied access to their fields.

Mr. Chairman, the United States is also concerned by news reports that the authorities in the Transnistrian region have declared that they will hold an independence referendum. The United States will not recognize such a referendum. We reiterate our support for Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We are also concerned about the decree issued by the authorities in the Transnistrian region prohibiting non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from receiving funds from external sources, and placing other restrictions on the ability to create and operate NGOs. NGOs in the Transnistrian region provide humanitarian assistance to the poor, elderly and disabled, and to orphans. They operate summer camps for children, and fight trafficking in persons. The United States regrets that the people of the Transnistrian region will be denied access to this important source of assistance. We call on the authorities in Tiraspol to rescind this decree and to take steps to facilitate, rather than hinder, the vital work of NGOs.

Mr. Chairman, at this time I'd also like to take the opportunity to applaud again Ukraine's resolve in continuing to implement its bilateral customs protocol with Moldova, despite an enormous propaganda campaign that alleges the customs protocol has caused an economic blockade and humanitarian crisis. Objective third-party observers have refuted this misinformation, including the observers of the OSCE Mission to Moldova and the EU Border Assistance Mission. We understand that staple goods remain widely available in Transnistria at uninflated prices, and therefore we find no grounds for calling the Transnistrian authorities' self-blockade a humanitarian crisis. Moldova and Ukraine are well within their sovereign rights to enforce customs laws along their common border. Legitimate importers and exporters from the Transnistrian region lose nothing by registering their companies with the

central government in Chisinau. On the contrary, they stand to gain access to valuable international markets. Steps have also been taken to ensure there will be no double taxation.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, it is important to note that over six years have passed since the OSCE Istanbul Summit, at which the Russian Federation committed to withdraw its military forces from Moldovan territory. Regrettably, this process has not been completed. Recent Russian public statements suggesting that Russia does not plan to resume its withdrawal in the near future are extremely disappointing. We again call on the Russian Federation to resume its withdrawal. This would be an important signal to the Transnistrian leadership that the status quo will not last forever.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.